



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SIMPLE LIFE AS SHAKESPEARE VIEWED IT

“Yes, Stratford will help you to understand Shakespeare.” I have just been loitering, with mingled feelings, over the very beautiful and tender description of the Shakespeare country, of which this is the concluding sentence, in Dr. Furnivall’s last volume, *Shakespeare: Life and Work*. These pages bring back a flood of associations, for they call to mind a rare April day spent a few years since in and about Stratford with this great scholar and lover of his kind. As we walked through the village streets and rambled over the fields and by the river, the ineffable serenity of the village and the landscape seemed quite to possess his mind, and again and again he remarked, “How peaceful it all is; how peaceful!” I felt then the pathos of the mood, and I feel it doubly so now as I read this description of which “Peace” is the keynote. It was the pathetic longing of old age for that tranquillity of which life had allowed him all too little.

My own mood was naturally a very different one, and I ventured to remark that my thoughts kept insistently recurring to *As You Like It*, that I could not put the play out of mind. When I said this, all of Dr. Furnivall’s old-time fire awoke, and he replied, “Ah! that is right; you are young, and that is what Stratford ought to say to you. Yes, *As You Like It* was Shakespeare’s tribute to the scenes of his boyhood. Was it not like the great fellow he was, to show up that outlandish pastoral stuff by giving us the breath of these fragrant English meadows and woods, and by giving us real peasants in place of Lodge’s silly puppets, and then to crown the play with Rosalind? For you know the very spirit of Warwickshire was metamorphosed into that sweet young girl. *As You Like It* is Warwickshire on the stage. Those London chaps had a lot to say about the simple life, but Shakespeare told them the real truth about it, and he did it by just bringing everybody right out here into the country.”

It is as a study of false and true simplicity, as a satire on the one and an exposition of the other, that I invite consideration of

this charming play. It was probably in the year 1600, when he was at the very zenith of his achievement as a writer of comedies, that Shakespeare produced this sweetest and gentlest of his plays. The ninth year before had marked the beginning of his career as an independent dramatist with the writing of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the ninth year thereafter was to mark its conclusion in *The Tempest*. Eight comedies had been produced in gay and frolicsome mood, and eight others, which, with the exception of *Twelfth Night*, were in soberer vein, yet remained to be written.

The play is based upon Lodge's *Rosalynde*, a novel written ten years before, which follows implicitly the artificial pastoral tradition borrowed from Italy and France. This tradition is concerned with the idyllic existence of shepherds and shepherdesses, who are inherently gentle, and who on pleasant lawns and under soft Arcadian skies, tend their flocks and follow the sweet impulses of love and youth. *Rosalynde* was itself preceded by Sidney's *Arcadia*, a work of great vogue, which, along with many lyrics circulated in manuscript, had firmly established this affected pastoral tradition. Opposed to this tradition was a sturdy native movement, which made for the poetical treatment of English rustic life in its own nature-setting, which preferred the wildwood, the fields and the streams of England to the green lawns, the rose-bowers, and the fountains of a fabled realm, and the actual English peasants, to Arcadian shepherds. Children of the North, descendants of the warriors of the German forests and of the sea-treading Vikings, the passion for simple and wild nature was in the English blood. Centuries before, it had found expression in such songs as *Summer is icumen in*, and *Blow, Northern Wind*, it had been cherished during all the intervening years in the songs of the people, and had come to the literary surface again in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, and in the lyrics of many lesser songsters. Shakespeare's sympathies were altogether with this latter tradition, a preference that he had shown in his very first comedy, in the ruddy song of spring and winter with which it closes. Born in the heart of rural England, familiar with the mirth-laden songs of May that echoed through every village street in the spring-

time, is it any wonder that he resented the artificial nature-cult brought from over seas!

As You Like It gives full expression to this preference. When one compares the play with the novel, and observes that the Forest of Arden has been changed into an English wood and country side, the idyllic shepherds either discomfited and ridiculed or replaced by ludicrous boors, and euphuistic ladies of Arcadie changed into actual women, who, quite undeceived, play at being shepherds with gentle roguishness, the comedy is seen to offer a gentle and playful satire upon the pastoral cult, in which the Arcadian tradition is stripped of its false assumption of simplicity.*

The converse of this unmasking of pastoralism is the exposition of actual simplicity, in part through some of the characters furnished or suggested by the novel, in part through the addition of new characters altogether.

The shepherd group in *Rosalynde* consists of Coridon, Phœbe, and Montanus. Coridon is the traditional elderly shepherd, who reflects philosophically upon life, and administers wisdom and solace to the younger and more ardent swain. In the drama he is replaced by Corin, a clownish and muddy-headed boor. In order that the point of the satire may not be lost, Shakespeare is careful first to identify the character with its prototype, and introduces him in earnest converse with Silvus, the Montanus of the novel, who is confiding to his aged friend the extravagance of his passion:—

Sil. But if thy love were like to mine,—
As sure I think did never man love so —
How many actions most ridiculous
Hadst thou been drawn to by thy fantasy?

Cor. Into a thousand that I have forgotten.

* It should be observed that pastoral literature enjoyed the greatest vogue in England between 1589 and 1600, and that its decline after 1600 was very rapid. During this period, Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana Enamorada*, 'the most popular book in Europe,' was translated; three editions of Lodge's *Rosalynde*, four of Sidney's *Arcadia*, and two of Greene's *Menaphon* were published; at least eight pastoral dramas were produced; and a large number of pastoral lyrics were written, of which one hundred and sixty found their way into *England's Helicon*, published in 1600.

Sil. O, thou didst then ne'er love so heartily !
If thou rememberest not the slightest folly
That ever love did make thee run into,
Thou hast not lov'd :
Or if thou hast not sat as I do now,
Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress' praise,
Thou hast not lov'd :
Or if thou hast not broke from company
Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,
Thou hast not lov'd.
O Phebe, Phebe, Phebe !

The transformation of the character is accomplished in the amusing dialogue with Touchstone, who takes a mischievous delight in exposing Corin's stupidity, and proves with a whirlwind of false logic that the aged shepherd, having never been at court, is damned. In the course of the conversation Corin is invited to assume the philosopher:—

Touch. Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd ?

Cor. No more but that I know the more one sickens the worse at ease he is ; and that he that wants money, means and content is without three good friends ; that the property of rain is to wet and fire to burn ; that good pasture makes fat sheep, and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun ; that he that hath learned no wit by nature nor art may complain of good breeding or comes of a very dull kindred.

Touch. Such a one is a natural philosopher.

Upon this wise, says Shakespeare, is the philosophy of your real peasant, your untrained child of nature. After this scene the character is largely retired from the play, but, when he does appear, the bantering Touchstone is fast upon his heels.

In a similar vein, the chaste, Ovid-nurtured, euphuistic Phoebe and Montanus are changed into such country swain as the market day might bring to Stratford. Lodge's Phœbe is an adept at polite and elegant coquetry. She converses after this manner: "Wert thou [Montanus] as faire as Paris, as hardie as Hector, as constant as Troylus, as loving as Leander, Phoebe could not love, because she cannot love at all ; and therefore if thou pursue me with Phœbus, I must flie with Daphne." Shakespeare has replaced her with a petulant and spoiled country belle, vain and self-deceived.

Silvius, again, is a most amusing rustic; he is ridiculously helpless in his passion, and so gullible that even Rosalind cannot refrain from playing false strings upon him.

A still more charming arraignment of pastoralism is the invention of the inimitable characters of William and Audrey, who, like Corin, are submitted to the tender mercies of Touchstone. It certainly was the refinement of satire that Audrey could not understand Touchstone's allusion to Ovid, the poet of shepherds, and that Touchstone should complain that "When a man's verses cannot be understood, or a man's good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more deadly than a great reckoning in a little room. Truly, I would the gods had made thee poetical."

The introduction of the character of Touchstone is highly ingenious, furnishing as it does a clever foil to the vagaries of other characters. At the very first introduction of the pastoral element, Touchstone assumes the rôle of its satirist, and Shakespeare therein gives the key to his own attitude. Silvius has been lamenting to Corin of the distress that he suffers, and this leads Rosalind to say:—

Alas! poor shepherd! searching of thy wound,
I have by hard adventure found mine own.

Touchstone thereupon offers his testimony: "And I mine. I remember when I was in love I broke my sword upon a stone and bid him take that for coming a'night to Jane Smile: and I remember the kissing of her batlet and the cow's dugs that her pretty chapt hands had milked: and I remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her; from whom I took two cods and, giving her them again, said with weeping tears: 'Wear these for my sake.' We that are true lovers, run into strange capers; but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly." Further satire is directed against the pastoral laments, the lyric plaints of the love-lorn shepherds, which load the pages of the novel. Shakespeare cuts the number of these down to three and in each instance makes them the subject of ridicule. Even Orlando's verses do not escape; Touchstone, the official satirist, denominates them "the right butter-woman's rank to

market" and improvises a parody on them, and Rosalind herself is impartial enough to call them a "tedious homily of love."

Opposed to the shepherds is another group of forest residents, the exiled courtiers. Lodge kept the episode of the banished Duke in the background of his story, and only used it as a very incidental supplement to the main plot. Shakespeare brought this element into the foreground, and made it not only delightful in itself, but an artistic and essential part of the harmony of his theme. It is made to serve a double purpose. It introduces, by way of further contrast to the false nature tradition, the nature cult of the English folk, both as expressed in the Robin Hood legend and in the songs of Spring, and it also defines the spiritual function of nature with reference to human life.

The Robin Hood cult was itself a dream, but, as opposed to pastoralism, it was the sincere ideal of a simple folk, struggling for liberty. Just as hatred of sham was the very inspiring principle of the *Geste of Robin Hood*, and inculcated the love of honesty in the hearts of the people, so, properly enough, Shakespeare turned back to this tradition, dear to the English heart, to expose a literary sham as foreign as political inequality and injustice to the English spirit. Like this fabled hero, the banished Duke and his followers range the forest, fleeing the time carelessly as in the golden age. The chase of the deer, the table spread with simple fare, the pleasant hour of rest and converse beneath the trees, the night of untroubled sleep, meditation upon the open honesty of their simple life—such is the daily round. To this group are assigned the blithe and hearty songs of May, songs of the greenwood tree and of the lovers in the fields, that contrast with the affected pastoral lyrics.

The life of these temporary habitants of the forest also serves, as I say, to define the real value of intercourse with nature; namely, to act as a corrective of the artificialities and moral evils toward which civilization is ever tending. Consequently, to the Duke are given the beautiful verses beginning,—

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp?

in which the contrast between the elemental excellence of nature and the wrongs of mankind is elaborately defined. But when the Duke speaks after this fashion, he speaks as the trained and developed man, whom refinement has made capable of finding tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything. Moreover, though the Duke ends by saying "I would not change it," he returns to the court when circumstances allow, because there was the true field for his normal activities. The characters who speak intelligently of country life are from the city, and contrasted with the wisdom of the Duke is the clownish 'natural' philosophy of Corin.

Among the Duke's followers, is introduced, by way of contrast, one who has failed to learn the lesson either of man or nature, the misfit Jaques. He is the product of the evils of society, a man who has wandered to a far extreme from simplicity. Jaques is a man who has ransacked the world for novelty and amusement, and has indulged himself until our ordinary appetites and attachments have palled upon him. Consequently, all strong and earnest feeling irritates him, and he is thus equally annoyed by the heartiness of the Duke and his friends, and by Orlando's ardent love. He has often found courtesy to be merely formal and has thence made the deduction that it is always insincere — a deduction well accommodated to his self-indulgence and laziness — and has therefore elected to be rude. He has so exhausted the resources for selfish gratification that only novelty of a most unusual character can animate him. Such stimulus he finds for a short time in the forest life; such stimulus he discovers in Touchstone, wisdom wedded to novelty; and such stimulus he again seeks when, in the closing lines of the play, he turns to the untried life of the monastery. And yet, though he is on the high road to becoming so, Jaques is not altogether out of sorts with existence, as Victor Hugo thinks, not altogether world-weary. He is saved by his melancholy, of which he is still enamoured, and upon which he feeds with a relish. This yet gives zest to life, and stands between him and despair.

A still more exaggerated product of society is the civet-laden

LeBeau, who is early introduced into the play to show how far social man may fall from his estate. LeBeau never thinks, but, like Osric, skips hither and yon, a water-fly. He does not even know that life offers a problem.—If simplicity is not synonymous with rusticity, no more is it synonymous with society.

The constructive exposition of simplicity is best embodied in the character of Rosalind. The Rosalynde of the novel has something of the delicacy and playfulness of Shakespeare's heroine, but, even so, the Rosalynde-Alinda-Rosader group are only slightly differentiated from the actual shepherds. Rosalynde and Phœbe are both ladies of the court, masquerading in shepherd garb. Shakespeare heightens the characters of Rosalind, Celia, and Orlando as much as he unidealizes the peasants, so that a sharp contrast is secured. The character of Rosalind is developed with great care and with very evident enthusiasm, and quite dominates the play. The character of Celia, instead of offering contrast, as is Shakespeare's usual custom, is a subdued expression of the same type, and the character of Orlando, not to divert interest, is kept quite conventional. This melody, thought Shakespeare, called for an oaten reed, not opposing instruments.

The charm of Rosalind clearly lies in her simplicity, and the test and measure of her simplicity is her adjustment to life, to which she adapts herself with a certain infallible sureness and felicity. This adaptability is the result of a happy balance of mind and heart: her intellect is keen and her emotions sensitive, and she therefore understands people, and understands life.

So well balanced is her nature that her emotions never run away with her judgment. Even when her irate uncle bursts upon her with eyes full of anger to demand that she despatch herself with her safest haste, though she at once appreciates her situation, she argues the injustice of the act with judicial coolness. In only one situation is her repose shaken, and her effort to accomplish the novel adjustment, to regain her customary poise, forms a most delightful situation. It is the discovery that she is in love. Shakespeare has handled many another love awakening with felicity, the love of Juliet, of Beatrice, of

Miranda, but nowhere else is there such artistic modulation, such sweet distresses happily resolved.

Rosalind's keen insight into character enables her to form an instinctive just estimate of every one. She falls in love at first sight, but her love is not blind. Jaques she interprets from the very first words that he utters, and she will neither foster his melancholy nor, as do others, undertake the fruitless task of correcting it; she simply exposes in one sentence the folly of his way of living, and leaves him to his own shabbiness, surprised, humiliated, discomfited, his broken hobby-horse dangling at his heels. Rosalind is thrown into contact with varied kinds of people, this ardent lover and this ennui-taxed, self-absorbed misanthrope, an unjust uncle, an affectionate cousin, a perfumed courtier, a mirthful jester, an exiled parent, and she adapts herself to all with plastic certainty.

Nor is Rosalind less acute when it comes to interpreting herself. She has no self-deceptions, and she can judge her own conduct with the same impartiality that she judges that of others. Consequently, when she is so far in love that an inch more of delay would be a south sea of discovery, she can yet get our point of view and laugh with us at the extravagance of her passion. In this amusement at her own conduct, even when so sweetly distraught with love, is added the last touch to her irresistibleness. Her modesty is much more than the conventional modesty of good society. It is the modesty of an unbiased judgment and a generous nature, quick to note the excellences of others.

Gay and irresponsible as she usually appears, Rosalind is a philosopher, and all her acts may be referred to a unified, although possibly unconscious, theory of life. For the most part, this theory has to be deduced from her conduct, but on one occasion it is almost committed to language,—in the scene where she has her little brush with Jaques. Jaques has been telling her the tale of his melancholy, defining it with complacent gratification, and concludes: "It is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination warps me in a most humorous sadness."

And then to Rosalind's reflection that he had nothing as a result of his travels, he rejoins, "Yes, I have gained my experience," whereupon Rosalind retorts: "And your experience makes you sad. I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad, and to travel for it, too." Beneath this veil of bantering is a serious philosophy, a belief that life is a good and desirable thing, and that somehow circumstances and experience must yield happiness. To make the best of everything, to be happy and to give happiness, this is her notion of life.

In part an outgrowth of this philosophy, in part an expression of pure physical exuberance, is her playfulness, the most engaging of her qualities. This endearing playfulness of Rosalind's, so sparkling and airy, so facile and lithe, so piquant, yet so caressing, is to no small degree an instinctive effort to preserve true poise, a sure sense of the values of life. It is the attitude so often to be met in people who are really simple. Rosalind is not indifferent to the sober aspects of life, she is sensitive to its gravity, but she softens and lightens its experiences by holding them up for the sunlight to play upon them, and relieves the ordinary relations of the work-a-day world of their dullness and commonplaceness by a hovering gaiety. Rosalind is therefore playful not merely in the scenes where the presence of Orlando rouses her enthusiasm and stimulates her exuberant fancy to a thousand graceful vagaries, but even in those scenes where she is suffering mental or physical distress. So, in the scene at the court, where she is lamenting her father's banishment, in response to Celia's "Therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry," she replies, halfway between tears and laughter, "From henceforth I will, coz, and devise sports. Let me see: what think you of falling in love?" And likewise at the weary entrance to the forest she tries to forget her own fatigue and to relieve the weariness of Celia by playful gallantry: "I could find it in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman;—but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat."

In the love scenes themselves this sportiveness not only gives character and color to the match-making, but is an avenue of escape from undue emotion, a happy relief to surcharged feel-

ing. It is, as it were, dictated by a refined impulse for self-preservation. Contrast this happy threading of the troublous waters of love with that of the passion-tossed Sylvius and Phoebe! Rosalind has a sure sense which tells her when to trifle and when to be serious, and her playfulness is always timely and graceful, as her seriousness is always effective.

There can be no question, I think, that Shakespeare took a lively satisfaction in developing this character, for it is his most elaborate portrayal of a type that he had been experimenting upon from the very beginning,—the young woman of frank, girlish spirits, fun-loving, but always playful and gentle in her fun, resourceful, self-possessed, and mature in judgment.

The type is first suggested in the Rosalynde of *Love's Labour's Lost*. This play is, as it were, a little overture to the earlier comedies, for many situations and characters of the later plays are here suggested. Just as the sharp-tongued Katherine represents a type that finds its ultimate and most careful expression in the Beatrice of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and just as the full-blooded, prancing Biron, turning everything that his eye doth catch to a mirth-moving jest, represents a type that is reproduced in Mercutio and Gratiano, and that finds its complete exponent in Benedick, so the Rosalynde type finds its culmination in Rosalind.

It is to be met in the Julia of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, who has the same gentle playfulness combined with force, the balance of mind and heart, so conspicuous in Rosalind, and certainly to be met in the Portia of *The Merchant of Venice*, where it is given more prominence than in the preceding plays. Portia is usually interpreted as rather masculine, more contained than Rosalind, and less girlish, but the difference principally resides in the environments and the contrasting rôles to be played. A judge's gown and a shepherd's cloak imply quite a difference in deportment, one calling for an assumption of dignity, the other inviting roguishness and unconventionality. There are, to be sure, certain minor differences between Portia and Rosalind, but they are mainly such as are incidental to the experimenting in which, I believe, Shakespeare was engaged. Portia's playfulness, her equability, her self-assurance, her

understanding of people and of life, her youthfulness and zest for living, are all characteristics of the type.

Despite the satisfaction that Shakespeare must have felt in the creation and development of such characters as Julia and Portia, I believe that he had not yet hit upon the situation that allowed the most sympathetic delineation of the type. Julia's situation made the character appear somewhat too pathetic, and Portia's a trifle too staid and masculine. Not until he essayed *As You Like It* did Shakespeare find an ideal situation. But having found it, he gave full play to his fancy, allowed the character to dominate the play, and displayed it in a succession of brilliant scenes, presenting one aspect of the character after another with true artistic delight;—a sweet young girl, just at the meeting of youth and womanhood, playful, tender, ardent in spirit, wise in judgment, in the finest sense simple.

As You Like It is, then, in one aspect a gentle satire upon pastoralism, and in another a definition of the real spiritual worth of woods and fields to man, but in its most comprehensive aspect it is an exposition of simplicity. This is not synonymous with an undeveloped society, but consists in a proper adjustment to life. It demands an equipoise of mind and heart, and the working knowledge that happiness attends upon goodness.

Men in all ages have reflected upon the simple life, but who to better effect than our sweet bard of Avon!

FREDERICK MORGAN PADEFORD.

Seattle, Washington.